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AUTHOR Thomas, Gretchen, Ed.; Kreitzman, Ruth, Ed.
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ABSTRACT

This document presents notes on the thoughts, wishes, problems, and ideas that came from two and a half days of discussion by leaders of twenty teachers' centers. The notes are divided into four sections, corresponding to the topics addressed: teachers' study groups, the role of the advisor, community involvement, and evaluation. In the first section the prime concerns of study groups and their members are addressed. The beginnings and initial structures of the groups, their content and growth over time, and the products which may emerge are discussed. The second section examines the role of the advisor or master teacher in a study group. People with experience in both roles, teaching in a center, and advising in a classroom, observe significant differences between them. In the third section five participants describe community participation in their centers. The final section is devoted to the question of how to evaluate a teachers' center and offers questions that may be helpful to others involved with teacher center activities. (JD)

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PROCEEDINGS OF

WORKPARTY #1

PHILADELPHIA

MARCH 28-30, 1977

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Teachers' Centers Exchange

Far West Laboratory for

Educational Research and Development

1855 Folsom Street

San Francisco, California 94103

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INTRODUCTION

Let us introduce these proceedings with a note of caution. These are not edited transcripts, or verbatim reports of conversations and discussions. These are, rather, "gleanings" from the workparty: thoughts, wishes, dreams, problems, and ideas that came out of two-and-a-half days of discussion by leaders of 20 teachers' centers. Together with some answers, you will find a great number of questions. Many of these are yet to be resolved.

The notes are divided into four sections, corresponding to the topics addressed at the workparty: teachers' study groups, the role of the advisor, community involvement, and evaluation. There is no common format for these notes. Instead, we have followed the flow of the meeting, in an attempt to draw a composite picture of the participants' concerns. We hope that these "gleanings" will convey those thoughts and insights which emerged during the workparty, and will act as a springboard for further discussion and action for all readers, whether you were in Philadelphia or not.

We invite reactions from all readers. We would like to receive your written statements, suggestions of additional related materials, and information on the work in these four topic areas that centers are undertaking around the country.

Teachers' Study Groups

TEACHERS' STUDY GROUPS

The following section is divided into several parts, which together address the prime concerns of study groups and their members. We have collected thoughts and ideas on the nature of these groups: their beginnings and initial structure; their content and growth over time; and the products which may emerge. We have also collected those questions which were voiced and raised during the workparty, and which remain to be answered. At the end of this section we have included thumbnail sketches of a number of study groups.

Beginnings and Structure

Study group work differs from the rest of a teachers' center's program only by being an ongoing group of people with a commitment to each other. Teachers work with students, come together to share experiences, and go back to the classroom to try things out in a new way because they have been changed by the exchange. For most center programs this process is internal (between course content and teacher) or one-to-one (between advisor and teacher or course leader and teacher). Many workshops are offered so that all participants learn from each other. These are exactly like the study group experience, except that in workshops the group ceases to meet when the workshop sessions end. The special meaning for many people of summer institutes has been the opportunity for sustained, intense interaction with colleagues, such as study groups also provide. Once the members know each other well, new connections--understandings that are fresh, alive, vital, very important--are much more easily made.

The difference between a workshop and a study group is that a workshop is a doing, hands-on activity, usually around one topic, for a limited number of sessions. All teachers have needs for workshops at some times and for discussion at other times. Workshops and study groups are not hierarchical.

Should teachers' study groups be doing groups as well as talking and thinking groups? Some feel that members of study groups should work together in ways other than always discussing verbally: that they can also draw, act, photograph, explore, and exchange new learning experiences.

How is a study group different from informal conversations among teachers? A "formal" group is one in which more than four people meet regularly for several hours, over an extended period of time, and keep notes of their work--a sustained and serious endeavor for which its members volunteer time.

Meetings take place anywhere from daily to once a month until the project is finished. Groups that are ongoing for longer than a year often settle into weekly or every-other-week schedules with breaks during school vacations. Some, on the other hand, choose to meet more intensively during the summer, when people have more time and energy. Some groups save up "work projects"--writing, analyzing data, taking trips together, transcribing tapes--for vacations.

The group "recorder" is a common element. Many people have decided to tape meetings; later the recorder uses the tape for writing up notes. Some groups rotate recording responsibility, others do not. Several groups believe that the notes of meetings provide a vital indication of change and growth in the group.

A teachers' center is a convenient place for teachers to get together. At the beginning,

there is often a key person on the staff who can encourage ongoing discussions among a group of teachers. The discussions may be around a curriculum topic or an aspect of children's behavior, or children's learning. These "conversations" may then evolve into a more formal teachers' study group.

The center can offer these groups hospitality, coffee, privacy, a tape-recorder, and space in the newsletter. It must let the group members know that what they are doing is valued. The center can feed fuel to the fire with encouragement, support, help, and potential group members.

When outside people "drop in" they raise a need for the group to explain itself. As long as this is an infrequent occurrence, it is a valuable one.

Some groups begin out of a desire to pursue a common topic (e.g. children's thinking, reading). Others begin as support groups (for example, all art teachers, all substitute teachers). These latter groups may form out of frustration. But if they develop a specific focus they become more than "sharing-our-problems" groups.

So long as the focus of the discussion cuts across/relates to the experience of all group members, it is possible to mix participants of different ages, background, teaching experience, and grade levels. It's very important and constructive to have a great diversity among the group members. The common core is that they are all talking about children and what happens in their classrooms. All teachers are capable with the support of the group of speaking meaningfully about this.

Variety of types of schools and ages of children has one great advantage: it shakes everyone out of old assumptions. It challenges all the participants to describe their own situations very clearly. A person describing

an activity has to present it anthropologically, in its full socioeconomic, emotional, social, religious, cognitive frame. The teacher speaking must piece together an image, a picture of his or her room, so that the others can understand what it is really like. One teacher said: "I know more about the teachers and their rooms and their children in this group than I do about the teachers in my own school."

Some groups are made up of people from different schools. (One group, for example, has a constraint that only one person from any one school may attend.) This procedure has the advantage that the members feel they are meeting on neutral territory, and that nobody is checking up on them. They are confident that they are not being evaluated on their performance, and thus they can be very un-selfconscious. It's easy for newcomers to feel supported and quickly feel like members of the group. It also keeps "in-school gossip" to a minimum.

Difficulties can arise when part of the group is from the same school or is a small group of close friends. The difficulty may be overcome by time; however, it may be better not to begin in that way. A group develops its own shorthand language over time, but when a subgroup unconsciously makes references which the other members do not understand, it may take much longer for everyone to develop trust and respect for each other.

On the other hand, when a study group is made up of the whole staff of one school, the advantages include possiblities for collaborative effort, a strong likelihood that people will try out ideas between meetings, and a breaking-down of the barriers between administrators, specialists, and classroom teachers. The difficulty lies in getting a staff to put aside the politics of their school setting, to stop thinking about the "nuts and bolts" part of daily school life, and to focus on children's thinking and behavior.

There is much to be gained from mixing teachers of different grade levels (preschool through high school), different kinds of students (economically and behaviorally), different kinds of schools (day-care, public, private, parochial, alternative), so long as all of them share a commitment to working together on the topic. When the teachers themselves come from widely different experiences and backgrounds, the variety can greatly enrich the group's work, but it may make discussions difficult at first until the group develops trust and respect for each member.

The discussion leader has an important role in the group as a facilitator. The leader can ease early growing pains by keeping any person or small group from dominating; by clearly valuing all contributions and perspectives; and by steering everyone away from "offering solutions." The leader must foster a sense of respect for each person's contribution that helps prevent domination by any one group. For example, one group of teacher aides expanded in its second year to include classroom teachers and eventually the original members dropped out because the meetings had become "too cerebral."

The structure and growth of the group will, of course, differ from situation to situation. Some groups rotate leadership. Some do not. A group does not depend upon having a strong or charismatic leader. But it does depend upon the example of the leader to listen, respect, and trust.

A leader can be a catalyst, a person who attracts people with a common interest. It may be a person who works in the style of an advisor, or it may be an energetic teacher. It needs to be a person with a low profile, yet one who is able to seize opportunities for bringing people together when such a need arises. A teachers' center as an attractive welcoming place can be an important factor in bringing people together.

The feeling of being powerful and in charge of the situation is important. Group members must feel like co-workers with the group leader. The group leader/facilitator must be non-judgmental and supportive.

Plan the group size: 8-12 members is the optimum number. This is the best size for developing trust and support, and also allows the group to continue when some members are absent.

Some groups evolve after personal connections have been made. Others begin with strangers and develop trust through their first months of working together. In all cases, the group dynamics must be understood and dealt with directly. Every member--not just the leader--must see this as an individual responsibility. It is easy to bog down, especially at the beginning, because either too little or too much attention is being paid to this. It takes a long time to really begin to learn together, because that does not happen without trust and respect. Both usually develop after there has been enough time for a personal, human connection to have been made.

In these groups it is important that everyone learn to listen very carefully and then be able to reflect back to each other what is being said.

There must be a feeling of <u>respect</u> for everyone.

Several advisors said they felt a need for a group of this kind, both for their own learning and also to help the classroom teachers they work with. Advisors and workshop leaders often find that because they are constantly forming new relationships, they have the feeling of always "starting over" in their work. An ongoing study group can be the vehicle for advisors' <u>own</u> "staff development."

Although many teachers assume that this type of group will take time away from commitments they already have, they find in fact that the perspective they develop toward teaching as a result of being in the group actually gives them more time and a helpful sense of distance from the daily pressures of directing a class' work.

Content and Growth Over Time

Many types of teachers' study groups have emerged; the differences are sometimes striking. Some see their role as "problem stating" or "problem clarifying"; members of these groups are discouraged from offering solutions. There is an assumption in them that the teacher's own growth comes first and leads to change for the child. Other groups feel that their purpose is collective problem solving, with the constraint that the individual teacher holds the final decision about what action will be taken. There is an assumption here that the direct result of the meeting will be in change for the child.

Most people agree that, rather than offering direct solutions, group members need to encourage each other to go back and make repeated observations of a child or a situation. They try to ask each other questions which stimulate more careful observations. There needs to be a sense of experimentation--what might happen if...? When someone does generate a hypothesis, it is followed by speculation on many possibilities.

The most important "studying" activity does not take place in the group meeting. It takes place between meetings, in the classroom with the

children, as teachers work with them, talk with them, and observe them. The learning takes place in observation and documentation in the classroom, in written reflections, and in further reading and discussion outside the group. Although it takes time (perhaps more than one year) to develop, this kind of between-group activity is guaranteed to happen if the group continues meeting.

It is important in the group to focus discussion on an agreed-on topic. This keeps the discussion off the week's events or spontaneous digressions. A clearly-stated single issue or question helps focus the discussion. It is also important that the group members have the shared assumption that teachers are studying the topic, rather than just talking about it. Everyone must take responsibility for keeping the discussion on target.

One way of maintaining a focus is to identify a neutral topic that has to do with children's behavior. Thus the discussion does not degenerate into comparisons of teachers' rooms or professional competitiveness. A neutral focus is a necessary beginning point if the group members do not know each other personally (even if they work in the same building).

Some groups prefer to use a case-study format. In this approach, everyone who has had contact with a certain child provides some input to a composite picture. The whole staff then brainstorms possible approaches the teacher may take to the problem. This method can lead to keen observation and use of documentation, provided that people accept responsibility for keeping things going. The staff can find itself working together more in this type of structure because it shares responsibility for certain children.

As far as the content of the discussion and specific examples are concerned, some groups have found that it is important to keep the

discussion focused on a description of behavior, and not on the interpretation of that behavior, since the latter may lead to "labeling" and to closing off the possibilities for new perspectives.

If the group focuses on curriculum, the children's individual needs and styles may be forgotten. If the study focuses on children's behavior and learning, curriculum is not forgotten but is discussed as the specific structure within which the learning is taking place.

Where people do not feel a need to look more carefully at their students or their own learning, or to consider better ways of teaching, they will realize they do in fact have this need if they can first benefit from it directly. (For example, the teachers in St. Louis who worked together to observe only the difficulties of children with diagnosed learning problems, derived immediate benefit from shared observations and mutual support. Through this they began to look more closely at all their children and their own teaching. These were not teachers who would have formed a formal study group without the original experience of "staff development" and the opportunity to study one child together carefully.)

It is important that the classroom teachers can choose to pick up on the recommendations or to ignore them. The final decision about what changes to make always lies in the teacher's hands. But, inevitably, some sort of positive change takes place, if only as a result of the teacher's intense focusing on a child's (or class') needs and behavior.

Groups rely on actual examples from children's work and conversations to support teachers' observations.

Experienced teachers are interested in exploring the "process" of learning and growth and

how it works. They are also aware of, and intrigued by, the way their perceptions change over time.

The tone must be maintained that everyone's contribution is valuable. Group members will eventually see that their resources for their learning lie within themselves.

The point of it all--the prime thing--is the practice in the classroom.

Products of the Group

Keeping notes has the basic purpose of showing that what is said in the meeting is important. This helps people speak thoughtfully, listen better, reflect more, and respect each other's statements.

When people use the notes to reflect back on their own thoughts, "writing" becomes far less threatening.

The person who is writing notes needs to keep in mind these questions: What happened at the meeting? What meaning did it have? How can I convey that to my audience (readers)?

There is always the question of who does the writing. Is it the group leader or a group member? If one person does the writing, the notes may become that person's individual

"project." Yet collaborative writing within the group takes far more time, and often the product satisfies nobody. Potential growth for each writer is great, because the process of questioning and organizing material, and of expressing oneself for an audience is far more challenging than simply talking together about a subject. The written record "helps us remind ourselves of what we have said," and is also available for telling others about what is being said and done in the group. "Listening to the tape a second time is a much more honest and accurate summary than my note-taking."

Three groups who reported beginning with notes, and growing dissatisfied with them--"because the things that were happening were so exciting that we didn't want to risk losing them"--are all now taping meetings and later typing notes from the tape.

One method of collaborative writing: three to four group members discuss a preselected particular topic for about two hours. The tape of this discussion is then transcribed roughly and returned to the larger group for additional notes and comments. The final document allows a great deal of expertise to be shared.

Does the writing that comes out of the group represent an accumulated knowledge base which can be passed on to others? Or is it available simply for the personal growth of the group members? One group made careful notes of their meetings just for themselves, but later found they were able to share these meaningfully with other groups.

An historical description of the group, defining and describing the growth process of different members, is a useful written tool for exchange between groups.

Any writing is just the "tip of the iceberg." It cannot really convey the thoughts and vital connections that are made in face-to-face contact.

Notes do not have to wrap up issues neatly on the first go-round. Drafts can be rough and unrevised, so long as they are readable and clearly convey what went on in the meeting. Notes which are not written in extended language take a little extra effort to follow, but if the members are really focusing on the issues, the effort is worthwhile. With a little reading and a lot of thinking, relationships emerge which would otherwise have been missed.

Writing may take place in several steps: journals kept by each member; notes on the meeting; papers written by individuals, using the notes as material. Other forms of expression the group can consider include workshops, video, drama.

Philip Morrison once told the Elementary Science Study developers: "Give them the third best and get on with it because you'll never get first best, and second best will be too late coming."

Teachers' Study Groups: Questions

We have collected here the questions that workparty participants felt were important for the topic of teachers' study groups. Together they constitute an overview of the basic concerns that study groups have to deal with. We have loosely grouped them into three categories which correspond to the discussion sessions held at the workparty.

Beginnings and Structure

Isn't it true that study groups need a concern for practicality, for the real world?

What are the how-to logistics of recruiting and setting up a study group?

What are the common elements--goals and assumptions--of different groups?

Which kinds of teachers should participate?

Which grade level teachers--elementary or secondary--should participate? Should teachers in one group be from the same level or from mixed levels?

At which stage in a teacher's development is a study group most valuable? Is it best for beginning teachers, or for teachers with a few years' experience who need new directions?

What is the role of parents in studying children? To what extent does a center reach out to parents?

How do you go about identifying possible participants and making yourself known to them?

What can centers do to facilitate and support study groups, especially with limited staff?

How are the meetings structured?

How can study groups and teachers' centers support teachers so that they feel they have more time for observing their own classrooms and for documenting their experiences?

How do group members take the raw material of what happens in the classroom--their own experiences--and somehow cull from that the real and deeper concerns of teachers? Stated concerns are often not the real concerns. How can a study group be formed around these real concerns?

In which ways can study groups relate to the design and space plan of schools and centers?

Which aspects of study groups have relevance for undergraduate students?

Is it appropriate for study groups to function at all?

Content and Growth

How can more teachers, beyond a very small group, become involved and remain involved?

How can groups keep going? How can study on a particular focus be sustained?

How do teachers see the role of "theory" in their focused observations and discussions of children's learning?

How can a balance be achieved between discussion based on research literature and discussion based on personal experience? How can a balance be achieved between discussion of issues and discussion of actual data that has been collected by group participants?

Which strategies have proved effective for focusing and stretching participants' contributions, once they are in a group?

What is the role of time in the inquiry process?

Which processes contribute to a greater depth of understanding of children, and greater observation skills by teachers? How does a group grow organically?

What are the specific skills of the leader and how do they parallel the skills of other center staff roles?

Which are the kinds of group models that have proved effective?

What are the implications of the selection of the participants? How alike, or how different, should they be?

Are these groups utopian? Are they political and humane as well as educational?

How do groups survive and grow for children, teachers, and other concerned adults?

Study groups seem cerebral. How does such a cerebral experience filter down to children? How does it help adults be open to children? How does this work get back into the classroom?

What are the different functions that study groups can serve?

Products of the Group

How can the information that groups collect be shared and used, and made applicable in other places?

What is the role of writing in these groups? What is the role of written records for each meeting?

How can the overall view that teachers get from being in a study group be shared so that it becomes useful to others?

How can the written products of study groups be made available and <u>useful</u> to other teachers?

In which other ways, other than through written records, can group members share their views with "outsiders"?

Thumbnail Sketches

Children's Thinking Seminars

Bill Hull, 40 Reservoir Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. (617) 354-7042.
Weekly group began six years ago; K-12 teachers, one only from any one school, totals about ten. Experienced and beginners.

Sara Hull, 40 Reservoir Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. (617) 354-7042.
Weekly group began four years ago. Limit of ten members, mostly experienced.

Kathe Jervis, 766 Malcolm Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90024. (213) 474-4423.
Group began one year ago. Meets every two weeks. Eight teachers from five schools, all experienced.

Amity Buxton, Teacher Shelter, 314 E. 10th Street, Oakland, California 94606.
(415) 836-2622, ext. 878.
Group began six months ago. Meets every two weeks. Eight teachers from seven schools, experienced and beginners, K-6.

Kathleen Raoul, 153A Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. (617) 876-3513.
Weekly group began three years ago. All first-year teachers.

The first group was started by Bill Hull when he was discouraged by "staff development discussion" efforts of the faculty at one school. He decided to start a study/discussion group made up of people from several schools. Additional spin-off groups were started later by members of the original group, and by other interested and sympathetic people. The groups share common objectives: better understanding and deepening observation of children, and discussions of productive teacher-child interaction.

The meetings focus on "instances" which teachers bring in to discuss. Some groups narrow the focus to instances within a pre-arranged topic (eg. children's work with clay, class meetings, movement). There is a strictly-held ground rule that discussions focus on specific children in specific describable situations; generalizations, abstractions, and theories are actively discouraged. The group leader acts as a discussion facilitator. Conversations at meetings are taped and written up later by the group leader in the form of "Notes and Commentary." Members are encouraged to write up accounts of children's thinking and their reflections on it. Reading and thinking about "Notes and Commentary" between meetings is essential to the seminar process. Teachers sometimes write collections of thoughts, or articles, after using the Index to reread pertinent parts of the "Notes and Commentary." Seminar members stress that this "process writing" is done to help them rethink certain issues or topics. Occasionally sub-groups form to meet on one topic (eg. math, shifting focus, emotional support between children), but there is seldom enough time or energy for this.

The "Notes and Commentary" are produced after each meeting. One member (usually the group leader) listens to the tape and writes notes of all that went on, adding his/her own views, in the form of commentary. These hundreds of pages of "Notes and Commentary" comprise a rich mine of experiential data on children's learning and teachers' teaching. They are in the process of being indexed. In addition, seminar members have written articles and pieces on specific topics; some of these are in near-publishable form. The groups are looking for ways to make the written materials available to other teachers who are not in seminar groups.

Children's Conversations

Posie Churchill, 35 Lakeview Avenue, Cambrige, Massachusetts 02138. (617) 547-3342.

Ricky Carter, Hanscomb Primary School, Bedford Air Force Base, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730. (617) 274-7721/2.

This group of four primary teachers in one school has been meeting for one year with Posie Churchill, an advisor, formerly with Education Development Center, Newton, Massachusetts, and the Elementary Science Study. The group was initiated by Ricky Carter, who had been a member of the Children's Thinking Seminar in Cambridge, and wanted to continue that experience and share it with the staff of his school. The group seeks to deepen teachers' understanding of children, help teachers listen more to children's talk, and stimulate reflection and record-keeping. It does this through focusing on children's conversations, as recorded in the classroom by Posie. The three teachers meet regularly with Posie and Ricky to discuss the transcripts, to talk about individual children's development, and teachers' roles in different situations. Care is taken to focus on what children actually say, rather than on preconceived questions or curriculum concerns. The leader attempts to relate children's talk to their development, and to support the group in making hypotheses and asking questions. Record-keeping is achieved through transcripts of the classroom conversations, transcripts of the group's meetings, and regular reports to the Teachers' Centers Exchange, which has provided Posie's time with the group.

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Children's Dominion Behavior

Virginia Klaus, The Educational Confederation, 4501 Westminster Place, St. Louis, Missouri 63108. (314) 367-2112.

The study originated when one school asked their advisor (Virginia Klaus) to help work on the design of a new playground. The advisor suggested a study of children in the current playground as first steps toward a design stage. As teachers began to make notations about children's behavior, they shared thoughts on most prevalent patterns, and chose to observe the way children act territorially, and identify ownership. After a teacher had read an article on "dominion behavior," this topic became the name of the study. Teachers from nine schools have been observing and taking notes on instances of dominion, with things, toys, places, and also with people--"you can't play with him, he's my friend." About 15 teachers now meet together monthly to work collaboratively. Individual teachers can discuss this topic in weekly meetings with the advisor.

Support groups for art teachers and counselors

Edie Klausner, Advisory Center for the Improvement of Education, Coulter and Morris Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144. (215) 849-7149.

These two support groups meet to exchange ideas, curriculum materials, experiences, and problems. The groups were initiated through announcements in the Advisory calendar. The art teachers have been meeting for two years, and the counselors for one year.

Use and Sequencing of Classroom Materials

Judy Vandergrift, Teacher Curriculum Work Center, 1400 E. 53rd Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615. (312) 955-1329.

About six or seven teachers meet to focus on sequencing of activities--how to work in greater depth using the same materials over a long period of time. Members were recruited through the Center's newsletter. The teachers felt a need to find ways of integrating their own choice of curriculum materials with those that the school district wanted them to use. The group has attempted to write up its conclusions, but has little time for writing beyond notes taken at the meeting.

Staff Review of Children and Reflective Conversations

Corrine Hyman, Prospect School, North Bennington, Vermont 05257. (802) 442-8134.

The meetings act as staff development for teachers at Prospect School. At staff review sessions teachers present a wide range of material on an individual child, including examples of the child's work. A carefully focused group discussion ensues in which hypotheses can be developed on themes and styles for one child or motif. Through this the staff hopes to gain a much deeper picture of a child's individual mode of expression, themes, and individuality, and to understand better the range of children's work with one medium.

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Study of Catherine Stern's Structural Arithmetic

Julia Grove, Philadelphia Teacher/Parent Center, 16th and Lombard Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19146. (215) 732-3205.

The group no longer meets, but was in existence for two years. It began when a group of teacher aides asked Julie to help them learn how to use math manipulatives. She responded that instead of teaching them, she would prefer to study the topic with them. At the time she was exploring Catherine Stern's materials, and the group agreed to focus on the concepts in Structural Arithmetic. The teacher aides met with Julia for one year. The aides were very excited about the work they were doing, and shared it with their classroom teacher co-workers. Classroom teachers began to attend meetings, which subsequently became too "cerebral," with the result that the aides left the group. Shortly after, the group disbanded completely.

Alternative Assessment Study Group

Amity Buxton, Teacher Shelter, 314 E. 10th Street, Oakland, California 94606. (415) 836-2622, ext. 878.

Started in 1973 by a group of about 30 Early Childhood teachers from all over the Bay Area who wanted to write a position paper on alternative assessment. Monthly meetings focus on members' work in evaluation and assessment, and on current reading (such as North Dakota Study Group materials). They are presently considering writing a position paper on alternative assessment.

Book Study Group

Lillian Weber, WCOE, City College, School of Education, Room 6, Shepard Hall, Convent Avenue and 140th Street, New York, New York 10031. (212) 368-1619.

About 20-30 open education teachers meet on a regular basis to reinforce their commitment to "the wholeness of the individual growth patterns of each child." The group began in 1975, and met for two school years. It started when teachers asked the Workshop Center for Open Education for a place to meet to discuss children's vulnerability and ability to cope in the context of the New York City schools' crisis. Teachers found that sharing their insights reinforced their capacity fo rely on intelligence and understanding in their teaching, and provided them with resilience in their constant dealing with crisis situations. Two teachers volunteer to lead each session, with discussion leading off from Lois Murphy's and Alice Moriarty's book, Vulnerability, Coping, and Growth: From Infancy to Early Adolescence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

Teachers' Center Group

Tom O'Brien, Teachers' Center Project, Box 122, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois 62026. (618) 692-2112/692-3086.

In this case, the teachers' center activities are like those of a study group. At three different sites around St. Louis, three groups meet weekly for ongoing collaborative research. A group decides on a specific topic (e.g. first grade math activities; watching the growth of number knowledge in children; chiildren's attitudes and beliefs). Each teacher carries out a

pre-arranged activity (e.g. keeping notes on four children's math work over time; asking all children to write about their mothers). At meetings the group members discuss and compile the results. The aim is to help teachers become researchers who can then apply these results to their own classroom practice.

Advisory Exchange

Dianne Sautter, Education Resource Center, 735 West Sheridan Road, Chicago, Illinois 60613. (312) 935-1151.

A "network" of Chicago advisors--teachers' center staff who work in classrooms with teachers--meets monthly to discuss experiences, support each other, and develop expertise. Meetings usually focus on an article read beforehand or a visiting speaker.

The following groups were mentioned at the workparty but were not described in detail:

"Reflective Study Groups": Dorothy Finkin, Center for Teaching and Learning, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202. (701) 777-2674.

Staffs in 20 elementary schools each meet for weekly discussions. These groups were formed from the example of the Cambridge Children's Thinking Seminars.

Piaget Support and Study Group: Jeanette Gray, 2343 Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44121.

This group, initiated in fall 1976, meets on Saturday mornings to "learn as much as possible about the human learning process."

Outdoor Ways of Learning: Charles Muckelray, Arts Magnet School, Oakland Public Schools, 1025 2nd Avenue, Oakland, California 94606.

Teachers take Saturday outings, then meet over dinner to discuss how to use the experience with their students.

"Staffing" Study Group: Kathleen Clarke-Pearson, 1819 Forest Road, Durham, North Carolina 27705.

This group began in spring 1977. It grew out of Molly Purdie's work at Prospect School, Bennington, Vermont, on the approach of "staffing" one particular child's behavior.

First Days of School: Sharon Feiman, 5741 S. Kenwood, Chicago, Illinois 60637. (312) 947-8959.

The group consists of three teachers, one observer, one teachers' center member, and Sharon Feiman.

Case Studies of One Child: Helen Stanfield, The Educational Confederation Advisory, 4501 Westminster Place, St. Louis, Missouri 63108. (314) 367-2112.

Staff together discuss one child who has a learning problem. Follow-up in the classroom with an advisor is available.

Pre-School Directors: Shula Chernoff, The Teacher Center Inc., 425 College Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511. (203) 776-5987.

Principals' Group: Nancy Garrity, Creative Teaching Workshop, 115 Spring Street, New York, New York 10012. (212) 431-7710.

Reading Study Group: Frances Hawkins, Mountain View Center for Environmental Education, 1511 University Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80309. (303) 492-8421.

ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

What is an advisor?* Teachers' center staff people define the advisor as a master teacher or support person for teachers. Working alongside teachers, the advisor challenges and stimulates them, in a nonsupervisory and nonevaluative way, to question and improve their work. Some centers speak of all staff who work in the center as advisors; others narrow the term to mean center staff who go into schools to work with teachers in their classrooms, at the teachers' invitation. People with experience in both roles--teaching in a center, and advising in a classroom--observe significant differences between them. This latter, more narrow definition, is the one discussed at the workparty and in the following pages.

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* An advisor is not to be confused with an advisory board, sometimes called a policy board, which is responsible for determining the steps a teachers' center may take in its program, fund-raising, philosophy, outreach, and other "managerial" or administrative issues.

One of the most explicit and complete descriptions of the nature of the advisor's role in the classroom and of the many kinds of support an advisor offers, can be found in the study by Bussis, Amarel, and Chittenden, Beyond Surface Curriculum (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1976):

Advisor Perceived As:

A. Service and Administrative Agent

- brings, makes, or orders materials for teacher.
- reimburses expenses or arranges time off for educational purposes.
- acts as buffer between teacher and administration or parents in explaining program.
- acts as buffer with administration in settling problems (e.g., custodial complaints).

B. Extension of Teacher (helping hand; parallel activity)

- works with children in the classroom.
- helps teacher with the room arrangement.
- helps teacher make materials.
- works with children in the corridor or in the resource room.

C. Emotional Stabilizer and Stimulator

- provides reinforcement for teacher.
- is a morale booster.

- is a sympathetic listener, someone who "cares."
- inspires sense of group-belonging and purpose.

D. Respecter of Individuality

- understands teacher's perspective.
- knows teacher's room and what teacher is trying to accomplish.
- accepts teacher's goals and present level of development.
- respects individual ways of doing things.

E. Stage Director and Demonstrator (teacher's apparent intent is to "copy" what advisor does or transmit an idea directly into the classroom).

- shows teacher how to work with children.
- shows teacher what to do/what not to do (specific direction and criticism).
- shows teacher how to use materials.
- shows teacher how to set up room.
- determines teacher's needs and points out next steps.
- suggests specific ideas that teacher follows literally (e.g., scheduling day).

F. Diagnostician and Problem-solver

- teacher receives advice on specific problems (e.g., how to handle a particular child, how to "revitalize" an area in the room).

- teacher is able to pinpoint a problem not previously perceived after consultation with advisor; once problem is identified, the solution seems apparent and teacher regards problem as more or less "over."

G. Provider of Alternatives

- teacher receives new ideas for instructional activity, but retains responsibility (implicitly or explicitly) for selecting a particular idea and deciding upon an appropriate time, place, and manner for trying it out.

H. Explainer and Theorist

- explains educational principles.
- explains reasons for specific actions with children.
- provides theoretical rationale for open education.
- provides literature on open education and discusses it with the teacher.

I. Modeling Agent

- teacher infers general principles or patterns of new behavior by observing the advisor interact with children over materials or with other teachers over classroom or school issues.

J. Appreciative Critic and Discussant

- teacher gains insights from a thoughtful analysis of the classroom provided by an observer whom the teacher judges knowledgeable and understanding.

- In-depth discussion with advisor leads to new ideas or insights.

K. Provocative and Reflective Agent

- advisor's questions stimulate thought.
- discussion leads to teacher's awareness of self-progress.
- advisor helps teacher come to identify self-needs and priorities.
- "bouncing ideas off advisor" and "playing with ideas" in discussion leads to clarification and crystalizing of teacher's thought.

L. Leader and Challenger

- stimulates new efforts and ways of doing things on teacher's part (e.g., keeping anecdotal records and analyzing samples of children's work).
- provides model of a person who can rationally challenge arbitrary decisions; leads teacher to see himself capable of doing this when necessary.

The workparty brainstormed new characteristics and repeated well-established ones for the multi-faceted role of the advisor. Out of the experience and visions of the participants came the following dos and don'ts.

An advisor:

- Helps experienced teachers help other teachers, and works to build other strengths in the school, which can eventually replace the need for the advisor. Networks of support in local schools are a potential strength.

- Must help the teacher maintain a sense of professionalism and seriousness in the job.

- Must help strengthen the quality of life in the school, by supporting children and administrators, as well as teachers.

- Asks a lot of questions, but does not offer solutions or come up with immediate responses.

- Is in a lateral relationship with the classroom teacher, not a hierarchical one. The advisor and the teachers are part of a mutual learning process, and adapt to each other, offering each other support.

- Must be able to work skilfully with children and with materials.

- Must be able to help teachers express their problems and help them find ways to deal with those problems.

- Must be aware of the "public relations" role which is part or the advisor's function.

- Must therefore be aware of the local situation, including legislation, testing, schedule demands and limits, possibilities for alternative assessment, curriculum constraints, past history of resource personnel in particular schools, association of each school with the teachers' center, local resources available in the school.

- Helps teachers see their own political role as decision makers on policy issues.

- Draws into the teachers' center people who know the type of programs which are needed, and will work to develop or carry them out.

- Helps teachers consider the effects of particular curriculum programs, and is able to show relationships between basic skills and alternative curriculum approaches.

Above all, an advisor is not someone who is in the classroom to hold the teacher's hand, nor to establish a pre-conceived agenda. The advisor helps the teacher think about and plan the change which then takes place in the classroom.

Les Birdsall, who is attempting to develop a framework and strategy for staff development in California, lists several functions that a school resource team might undertake; all are responsiblities commonly assumed by advisors. The functions include:

> Linking the school site or district to outside resources that can aid the change process and the implementation of innovative programs.
>
> Bridging the gap that may exist between the perceptions of teachers and those of administrators concerning staff development needs.
>
> Assisting in the pacing of programs to match individual acceptance stages, delivering the right media or strategy at the right time.
>
> Generating a wide range of solution ideas as problems arise.

Common concerns about the role of the advisor

Concerns in a relationship with a teacher:

What motivates a person to become an advisor? Are there types of teachers, or types of personalities, who make good advisors?

How can an advisor help teachers become question-askers about their work? When a teacher wants to find new or better materials to use, and approaches an advisor for that help, how can the advisor then lead the teacher to look more carefully at the children themselves?

How can this be initiated right at the beginning of the relationship? Should this concern be the advisor's first priority?

What kind of "conditions" or "agreements" do advisors set with teachers at the beginning of their relationship?

Are there typical stages of this relationship which can be identified? Is concern about new or better classroom curriculum materials a common first stage? Are there other patterns that advisors have seen in teachers' work?

How does an advisor create in teachers the understanding that they are in charge of their own professional growth?

How does an advisor proceed when he/she is perceived by the teacher as a threat?

Should one advisor work simultaneously with begining teachers, experienced teachers, traditional teachers, and innovative teachers? (This is sometimes called multilevel advising.) What are its advantages or disadvantages?

Is it an advantage to introduce to each other all the teachers an advisor works with ?

How does an advisor help teachers who, through either their own belief or the district's mandate, are tied to a back-to-basics and skills management systems approach?

Should advisors see themselves as "phasing themselves out of work" by establishing a network of support within each school? How do they do this and how long does it take? Is it possible to do this if the staff transfers frequently?

What role does the teacher's center have in this ongoing support?

Before leaving, what plans do advisors make for the support services to continue from the same source? Teachers need support throughout all their teaching years. If the support does not exist, would an advisor consider staying in a school as many years as necessary, until the support develops? (In most people's experience, it takes much more than one year if there is little support at the beginning.) Or do advisors deliberately seek out schools where the support already exists? If so, what really are their goals?--to develop a strong support system? Or to help teachers begin to see children differently?

Can advisors truly have no agendas of their own with regard to how teachers manage their classrooms and interact with children and other staff?

How does the role of the advisor differ from that of the resource teacher or school district curriculum specialist? What are the differences in style and responsiblity? What is the relationship between the advisor and the resource teacher, special education teacher, etc.?

What type of strategies does the advisor employ to work alongside supervisors or resource teachers in public schools?

> The advisory system differs from old style supervision in one very important way. It is based on the notion that teachers are very much concerned about improving their teaching and that they will do so provided proper support conditions exist. In addition, this view holds that teachers are professionals with talent and ability and that they do not require coercion or direction from an outside authority to

> achieve high quality results in their work. The advisory view places the individual teachers in control of help to be received, and assumes that he or she will use, in a support system, those elements that are of most benefit at a given time.
>
> --Theodore Manolakes, "The Advisory System and Supervision," in Professional Supervision for Professional Teachers, edited by Thomas J. Sergiovanni (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1976).

Concerns vis-a-vis school districts:

How feasible is an advisory as an option for school district staff development?

What would it take in time and money to train advisors? How can such an investment be presented and defended before policy makers who hold the purse strings?

How can the impact of advisors on teachers' work in the classroom be reported to district administrators?

A recent study of inservice education conducted by Bruce Joyce of the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching points out the need for the advisory role outside of centers:

> A teacher who is attempting to implement a new curriculum and wishes hands-on help at various times throughout the school day wants to

have a trainer who is in residence or close by and who does not have too many other teachers on his mind.

...It appears to be insufficient to permit transfer of training to be the responsibility of the teacher alone, something he simply accomplishes as he carries out his various roles as a teacher. Rather, teachers need assistance in the form of feedback and collegiality in incorporating new elements received from training into their teaching repertoire.

...Teachers feel they need an integrated complex of activities so that, in addition to being introduced to a new approach or ideas and seeing it demonstrated, they are given classroom follow-through that permits personal exploration of and provides assistance in trying out the new approach or idea.

...The best delivery systems will be those in which a collegial atmosphere is developed within the school so that teachers continuously study their teaching in ways which meet their needs, continuously reflect on the products of their study, and continuously are provided follow-up to the study in their own classrooms.

Concerns about the role of the advisor vis-a-vis the teachers' center:

How do advisors help maintain the participation in the center of long-experienced teachers?

How do advisors help "hard-to-reach" teachers?

Is there a typical pattern of usage of the teachers' center by teachers who work with advisors? How is each teachers' center staff member like an advisor? How does their role in the center resemble, or differ, from their role in the classroom?

Concerns about the conditions which affect advisory work:

What arrangements, conditions, etc., allow for a long-term involvement of advisors with a group of teachers?

Can advisors be available to all the teachers in one school?

What are the constraints and advantages of working in public schools? In private schools? In day-care centers and preschools? In elementary schools?

Can advisors function constructively if their own beliefs are different from the directions of the district? What steps does an advisor take outside the district to become part of the system?

What implications does the advisor role have for conventional school district jobs, such as resource teachers and curriculum specialists?

How do teachers' professional organizations view advisors, their goals, and their styles of working?

How does needs assessment affect the advisor's work in the classroom and in the teachers' center?

> People who design inservice have to do more than run a "needs analysis." If a teacher seeks a new resource, the teacher-of-teachers has to observe what level the teacher is seeking to develop: awareness or competence? I observe that experienced teachers are saturated on the awareness level. There is a constant flooding of teachers with neat ideas plugging neat activities. What's lacking is the context for that activity, the connection of that teaching-learning act to the teachers' real world. Making that connection requires working with teachers at a level deeper than surface activity.
>
> --Bob Anderson, Oregon.

While most of the questions and concerns listed above remain unanswered, there are nevertheless a number of responses and recommendations which were shared by the members of the workparty. Again, consider these points as a springboard for further thinking, planning, and organizing:

In beginning a relationship with a teacher, an advisor should draw out of the teacher his or her immediate concerns. From that point they can together develop curriculum themes. Take, for example, a teacher whose prime concern is for the children to produce better writing. The advisor can then help by working with children as a model; by finding other teachers whom the advisee can observe and talk with; by encouraging the teacher to take writing workshops at the teachers' center; by helping the teacher observe the children's writing activities and patterns more carefully.

The advisor can begin work just before school opens.

The advisor offers a service which can be solicited by teachers themselves. The advisor often waits to be invited into the classroom by the teacher.

Regular meeting times after school for the advisor to get together with the teacher mean a serious commitment on both sides. A few advisors also ask for a commitment from teachers to come to the teachers' center.

Part of the advisor's role needs to be "helping teachers reflect on what is happening in their classroom; helping teachers get a better understanding of themselves," rather than setting an educational philosophy. The question would thus first be, "What is better writing?" instead of questions on books or workshops or examples of writing.

The quality of the discussion between the advisor and the teacher is most important. During these talks the advisor needs to try and discover exactly what the teacher means, and what the teacher really cares about. The advisor is a careful listener. Rather than taking responsibility for changes, the advisor works with the teacher to decide together what the next steps should be.

Both people must understand what they will change, and must expect these changes. An advisor's self-image should not be that of an external change agent, but of a participant in the growth in the classroom.

The advisor, therefore, does not bring solutions. At the beginning a teacher may expect solutions, while the advisor will hope for a discussion. Teachers will develop a personal investment in the work if they are directing it.

It is important that both advisor and teacher share an expectation that they will always be learning (from each other and from the children).

Over time, the advisor and teacher need to set priorities, deciding which areas they will work on intensely and in depth, and which areas require less attention. The question of time as a constraint is important. Before making any decisions about work which could be done, the advisor should consider how the teacher and children are restricted by time, and the alternatives time limits impose on them. The advisor must try to find both the strengths and weaknesses in the classroom.

It is often useful to use specific observations of children or "interviews" with teachers about their work as a basis for discussion. These can be used to articulate the teacher's strengths. (Beware of teachers who tend only to see their weaknesses.) The ETS reading study has shown the value of interviews in allowing teachers to look carefully and more objectively at their work in the classroom.

Advisors may also find it useful to write detailed observations of new children or children for whom the teacher has specific concerns. These can provide the basis for talks with the teacher.

Although many advisors find that bringing materials is a good way to begin work with a teacher, materials are not always welcome. An advisor bearing gifts of resources may impress the teacher--"This person really does come through in tangible ways"--but may also distress the teacher--"This person is here as a materials resource." But by working with a small group of children (about six) with a new material, the advisor can validate the child's need for that material. This activity can be made especially useful by tape-recording it, so that the teacher can later play back the tape.

When looking for people to work with, it may help the advisor to find a group of people who are already friends or have been working together, even though they may not have shared their teaching concerns. The advisor might try to spend one-third of the time in a school with a group of teachers.

In a school where the active parents tend to be hypercritical of teachers, the advisor may be able to organize a project that absorbs the parents' energies, gets them working with children, and helps them be more sympathetic to teachers and less judgmental. (At PS 84, in New York City, for example, parents worked on helping beautify and reorganize the lunchroom.)

People who are "targeted for change" in federally-funded programs are usually the people with the least power. Teachers often feel that the kids, not they, must change. The advisor helps the teacher take control of the growth of the classroom.

What kind of support do advisors themselves need?

Time--one day each week or certain days each month--should be set aside for advisors' own development. They need time to share problems, visit places, and extend their own learning. If advisors are not to become harassed by the pressures of a job where they can always do much more, they must have regular rest and relaxation, change of pace, and the chance for participation in other learning situations where they (and not the classroom teacher) are in charge. The advisor must try and maintain realistic expectations and a basic attitude of supporting the teacher and learning from the teacher.

With these in mind, the advisor will derive strength and energy from watching the changes others make, and from interaction with people. If advisors and teachers have shared certain growth together, they will both feel supported. They must respond to each other as fellow professionals. But advisors also need help from people other than classroom teachers that they work with, in order to see themselves objectively, and to choose their positions.

What kind of strategies can be employed for maintaining advisors within local schools?:

Elements to help keep morale high and risk-taking low, allowing advisors (and teachers) to keep their energies focused on their work:

- secure funds.
- job security.
- work with teachers who request advisor's services.
- work in schools which use resource teachers as in-classroom consultants/helpers (rather than "pull-out" programs), followed by time for after-school conversation.
- maintaining long-term relationships.
- establishing support networks among commmon-interest groups served by advisors .

Tactics:

- help school systems write proposals.
- get in on early planning.
- have teachers and principals request advisor's services.

- actively maintain lines of communication with all levels of the school system (there are supporters out there--find them and keep them).

- use teachers' responses to needs assessment to support the advisory function and your concept of the advisor's role.

- tape interviews at regular intervals with teachers about the ways their work has changed due to the advisor's help.

A Final Note:

> There is [an] important factor [in advisory work]--the changes come from the teachers' own experience, not from a set of imposed guidelines. No matter what happens, these teachers...will never be the same. Someone has cared enough about them as people to join them where they are, and light a small fire from their own humanity and warmth. This is what good teachers always try to do for children, and it is what almost never happens for teachers. This is what advisory work is all about. It is meant to give teachers the same care and understanding we want for children, non-judgmental support for what is often a lonely task.
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> --Adelaide Sproul, "Selections from an Advisor's Notebook," in Essays on Teachers' Centers, edited by Kathleen Devaney (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, in press).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Five workparty participants described community participation in their centers. Their definitions and approaches varied in several ways.

Community Education Center, Philadelphia

The neighborhood in which the Community Education Center is situated has a long history of vociferous participation in education. As its name implies, the CEC is building on this tradition. Long before the Center came into existence, the community had carved a school for itself out of a small area of Philadelphia between two very large neighboring schools. Through a great deal of hard work and political pressure, the community managed to create a small school, as it wanted. Out of this school grew two others, an alternative school for young children, and an alternative middle school (which is now in the same building as the CEC). This spirit of cooperation became a nesting-ground for the growth of the Center.

Some of the community people involved in creating these schools, together with other local groups and teachers, took their involvement a stage further, and became interested in working with the embryonic Center. A strong community group, which wanted to have parents, teachers and children rubbing shoulders without barriers, to support children's learning, helped the Center grow. This group was composed of teachers in the seven-school local area, parents, community people, and Title I schools community coordinators. Together they wanted to provide a resource to help parents get in touch with education, particularly innovative kinds of teaching.

In addition, many of the parents in the local area have not had much formal education, and wanted to develop skills for helping their children with schoolwork. Basic adult education fills this need, and has become a major theme in the growth of the Center. CEC has one of the few adult education courses in the city that meets at night. It has a high attendance rate, and the participants are serious and hardworking.

The community which the CEC serves is multi-layered, and includes several constituencies:

a) The immediate seven-school area, which is made up primarily of elementary schools, and one junior high, all supported by Title I. Most of the workshop participants and involved parents, plus the group that makes up the governing board, are drawn from this radius.

b) Since invitations to workshops and activities are not limited to the immediate area, people in the Philadelphia community-at-large, especially teachers, also use the Center.

c) Teacher Corps practicing teachers and staff are active in the Center. They help fund the Center by trading a staff person for use of materials and facilities.

d) Neighborhood children and young people use the Center for activities such as printmaking, photography, outdoor workshops.

e) Local community people attend neighborhood-oriented events, such as ceramics and yoga classes, and film shows.

f) Many community groups hold their own meetings in the Center.

The policies of the CEC are overseen by its very active board. Parents, teachers, and community people, all Center users, sit on the 20-member board. Their responsibilities include fund-raising, program planning, helping maintain the building, and setting new directions for the Center.

Mary Hale Seymour, CEC's director, feels that the board has "a vigorous role to play in the life of the Center."

New directions which the Center is planning include steps toward buying its own space, and building a closer relationship with the alternative middle school located in the same building.

Ways and Meaning Place, Harrisburg

The Ways and Meaning Place was started by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education to carry out policies in the arts and education program. It now runs a number of programs; the dominant ones are two basic arts programs, one in arts and special education, and the other in aesthetic education. By nature of these programs, the Center serves a very mixed constituency, which takes in the Harrisburg school district, the region, and also the state. About 30 school districts have made a commitment to use the aesthetic education program as part of their elementary program, and the arts and special education program now has lively interaction with ten intermediate district units in the state.

Within these areas the Center serves a varied community including teachers, children, and senior citizens. Inter-generational planning and programming has a special emphasis. Senior citizens share the building, work in the Ways and Meaning Place, and participate in programs with children on topics such as oral history and puppet-making. "The arts apply to all ages," says Bill Thompson, director of the Ways and Meaning Place.

Staff members also go out to targeted schools to work with teachers and with children, and the Center has contact with other schools through the "Arts File" newsletter, as well as through workshops and conferences. In addition, the Center is involved with the art museum in Pittsburgh, and a state arts festival.

Kansas City Learning Exchange, Kansas City

The Learning Exchange offers another interpretation of the term "community involvement" through its relationship with the business community of Kansas City, Missouri. The Exchange is enthusiastically supported by business and industry throughout the affluent Kansas City area, which is conservative education-wise, but progressive in terms of culture and lifestyle.

The links with the business community were forged at the very outset. Instead of looking for federal or district funding, the founders of the Exchange went to businesses, to see if they would support a teachers' center. The business community was very receptive and interested. "They felt they were not supporting schools and they were feeling guilty about it," says Gail Johnston, director and founder of the Learning Exchange. The Exchange first began in an old church with money from Hallmark Cards, Butler Manufacturing Company and other local concerns. At the same time, local foundations got interested in the project; one local foundation director, a visionary person, understood that sustained support of an educational group--not just one or two years--might really bring about some changes, and encouraged the Exchange's work. The Exchange is now in its fifth year.

"We've had a lot of buffer from the business community which says, 'Support this group, work with this group.' They feel we're a valuable service. Just as they support sports, they're saying, 'We need to support these things [educational endeavors] on a continuing basis.' We bring the business and educational community together. They don't understand each other. Our role is to raise questions, and support teachers, principals, parents in solving their problems. We're a conduit for ideas."

The financial board of the Exchange consists of 12 people, primarily from the business community, who raise money and advise on the general operating budget. This budget currently sustains a staff of 12 (ten full-time and two part-time).

The Exchange has succeeded in establishing a non-adversary relationship with the business community: "They have never asked us to compromise. They ask for quarterly reports, they sit on our board, they put money into us, but they don't challenge what we're doing." In fact, the Exchange can cooperate with business as a vehicle for programs. For example, the business community had been trying for the last 15 years to get economic education into the primary grades, but without success. The Exchange accepted the chance to design the program, and now runs an Economics-in-Action program which has been highly successful among teachers, parents, and children.

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Education Resource Center, Chicago

Since its inception, this Center has worked with parents and the community as well as with teachers. Dianne Sautter, ERC's director, feels that the development of local community support is critical to its survival. ERC is located in Lakeview, on Chicago's North Side. This is an upbeat, organized area that has long been involved in education, with a lot of high-powered people who are concerned about improving the city. The Center was initially conceived as a place to share community resources, where parents and teachers could come together.

An early thrust for support demonstrated these goals. A "Community Learning Fair" gathered together all sections of the community for a day of sharing skills, events, food, displays, and entertainment. This brought the Center wide coverage and publicity, plus $2,000, which it needed to open.

Community involvement was from then on solicited through various channels. Outreach was hard, due to lack of staff, and so the Center chose to offer programs which could be attractive to the immediate neighborhood. Recycle workshops and sessions bring in a mix of people, as do adult-child workshops, and once people visit the Center for workshops, they can become more active in other parts of the program. The Center has also begun to work more closely with community organizations, and has four senior citizens on the staff.

Both individuals and organizations in the community are represented on the Center's board of directors. Two board members coordinate local community fundraising (banks, businesses, individuals). Their role includes making contacts, sending out fundraising packets with follow-up calls and appointments, and organizing monthly wine and cheese gatherings. The contributions solicited are small, ranging from $50-$400 each. However, these

efforts result not only in financial and in-kind donations, but also as a mechanism to increase the local community's awareness of the Center's endeavors.

The Center has recently taken on a full-time bilingual community liaison staff person, who will initiate and support community participation programs in the schools, and reach out to parents and others in the largely Spanish-speaking local community.

Workshop Center For Open Education, New York

The Open Corridor Advisory Service and Workshop Center for Open Education together offer an example of working cooperation among the community, schools, and a college faculty. City College of New York (part of City University of New York), home of the Center and home base of the Advisory Service to Open Corridors, has become involved with the Harlem community in which it is located, and with the Upper West Side communities whose teachers it serves.

The faculty participated from the early days of the program, ten years ago, when Lillian Weber first established Open Corridors in an attempt to see if the public school system would support children's development in flexible ways, through the placement of student teachers in classroom settings with developmental learning approaches. Programs on individualizing curriculum materials, for example, brought together

CCNY faculty, student teachers and classroom teachers. The Workshop Center was begun in 1972 so that teachers who were not within Open Corridors, and were not receiving help from Open Corridor advisors, could find practical support for less formal ways of teaching. The Workshop Center has become an important teachers' resource for the CCNY faculty as well.

Upper West Side parents played an important role during the '60s in fighting for improved schools and for desegregated classrooms (heterogeneous grouping). The incentive to start the first Open Corridors came from both black and white parents who had been asking questions about what was going on in their children's schools. Concerned parents continue to volunteer in Open Corridor schools, where they are seen as active partners in the educational program, which aims to be continuous with the way children learn at home and in the neighborhood.

The Workshop Center reinforces its relationship with parents by running parent breakfasts on Friday mornings for discussion and inquiry on educational issues. The Center has now received funding from NIE to support two part-time parent facilitators, one at PS 78 and one at PS 84, who will reach out to parents, especially in the Spanish-speaking communities. The Center's workshops and events also draw participants from the Harlem community, who became interested in the Center and began to drop in. Saturday morning workshops are held for parents with children. One Summer Institute project produced a mural on a Harlem wall, interpreting the history of the community. The mural became a magnet for community participation. Local community groups, such as the Convent Avenue Beautification Organization, which works on gardens in the neighborhood, provide other links between the community and college facility. Community people give and take workshops, serve on the Workshop Center's advisory council, and provide substantial volunteer support in the Center during these days of financial cutbacks.

EVALUATION

The session about how to evaluate a teachers' center raised more questions than it answered. The following questions on evaluation processes and procedures may stimulate you to provide some answers.

What types and level of evaluation does your center need, and why? Does it need attendance numbers for statistics gathering? Does a center need to examine the quality of center staff work as a kind of staff development for itself? Does it need to document its programming over time as a form of program development?

What does an evaluation program look like when it is done by your own staff to answer your own questions, as compared to one done to satisfy an outside audience (e.g. school board, or funding agencies)? The internal or informal type is often more descriptive and documentary, less statistical. Must this distinction be drawn and is it helpful? How can your research help you reflect on who you are, and thus help strengthen your program?

How does your needs assessment and/or evaluation program affect your center's functioning? Who is the audience for your evaluation report? What kinds of evidence can you give them and how do you gather it?

Federal monies are often given with the requirement that a program prove what effect it has on children. What steps would your center need to take in order to provide this "proof"?

Would participation in the federal teacher center program require you to undertake a different form of evaluation--either to persuade an l.e.a. or i.h.e. to sponsor your proposal or to persuade the state department of education that you satisfy the guidelines?

What is the possible public relations impact of assessment and evaluation programs? How can they be used to increase visibility and credibility with local teachers and administrators, the school boards, state department, etc?

How is it possible to devise a method for evaluation which will not get in the way of, or detract from the program, but which will rather carry out the intention of the program, while still satisfying the demands of those who must be accountable to conventional standards?

How can you draw on/involve the local school system's (or university's) research team in evaluation work to the benefit of the center? How can you get "them" to work for "you"?

How can you efficiently retrieve information from registration or sign-in cards, and are these attendance numbers really helpful?

Statistics are impressive when looking for funding, but how is it possible to maintain a record-keeping system without getting bogged down? It is important to always keep in mind which questions are worth working really hard to retrieve, and for what purpose.

Once you have collected the data, how will you act upon what you learn from it? How will the findings be incorporated into the plans and philosophy of the center? Who will decide this? Should a commitment be made before the data is collected?

How can centers use their own evaluations to speak out against other types of evaluation that are damaging?

How can center staff use the evaluation process to help teachers learn to operate from this perspective, i.e., as observers and constructors of their own environment?

Numerous areas for focus and research suggest themselves.

We need to ask ourselves:

How is a particular center able to help schools be self-sustaining and self-changing? What are the daily happenings which make up that work?

How do district and/or state-wide testing or record-keeping programs affect the lives and work of children, teachers, and parents?

What kind of impact does a teachers' center have for the teachers themselves; for their students; for their classroom programs; and for their school as a whole?

What is the role and impact of the advisory or policy board on the program of the center?

What kinds of growth are experiened by new teachers who use the center?

In which ways do participants respond to a center, according to their age, length or type of teaching roles, and different experiences?

We need to know:

Exactly what center programs consist of, where they fit into the system, and how they can remain visible and funded.

Whether teachers participating in a center see the center as different from the traditional inservice offerings of the school district or county office, and if so, in which ways.

The distinguishing features which make teachers' centers programs distinctive.

The ways in which teachers' centers fit within the larger picture of inservice education, as required and determined by school districts and state departments of education.

The ways in which staff members spend their time, and why, and the changes they undergo over time.

The differences among centers, through comparative studies which look at different levels of development, programs, histories, needs and solutions.

We need to focus on the learning process and look at some of the following topics:

The relationships between basic skills and alternative curriculum approaches.

The relationships between the teacher's own learning and growth and the child's learning.

The way a teacher's own interest and involvement in a topic of investigation supports children's learning.

The best ways anxious adults can undertake new learning.

The nature of "teachers' centers' learning" and the ways it illustrates "open" or "humanistic" learning in its richest forms.

How to do it: several methods

1. Record-keeping systems

Cards: An individual card for each center user is kept. The card carries on it information about the time spent and the activities pursued at the center at each visit. These details can be added to the card each time, and provide statistics about the number of teachers who use the center and how. (For additional information, such as teachers' reactions, suggestions and criticisms, a fresh card each visit can be filled out by the users themselves.) These facts and comments can then support and guide program development. This system can serve as a model for teachers to encourage their students to keep records of their own learning. Center staff may adapt this card system to record their own interactions with individual center users.

Sign-in sheets: Collecting basic statistics about daily attendance figures, or attendance in specific programs and activities, can be accomplished through a simple sign-in sheet.

All sign-in systems should be designed in such a way to eliminate all the human weaknesses which prevent center users remembering to sign.

Nevertheless, Workshop Center for Open Education in New York surveyed their attendance figures and found that one-third of the attenders forget to sign in. (And when it comes to funding, those statistics can count).

One route to statistics analysis: See if education graduate students can use them for practice samples in statistics courses.

2. Needs Assessment

Filling out forms for needs assessment gives teachers and others a regular opportunity to have input in the center's program. The forms can emphasize aspects of the program which the staff wish to continue/expand and the staff can thus receive feedback from the users on their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the program. Needs assessment can become an ongoing process when teachers plan the future work they want to undertake, and constantly reassess it.

3. Questionnaires

Questionnaires designed by outside evaluators often do not in fact provide the answers which the center's staff really wants or needs to know. Decide which questions need to be answered, and build the questionnaire from those needs.

4. Face-to-face interviews

Interviews should be conducted by people who know the center well, but are not involved in its day-to-day workings. It can be advantageous for parents to interview other parents, teachers to interview other teachers, etc. Interview questions should rely heavily on the perspective of staff who are deeply involved in the center. Fewer, in-depth interviews have proved more helpful than numerous short interviews. If each interview lasts longer than an hour,

with a set of detailed answers, sufficient information and feedback for a full evaluation should be available from about 20-25 interviews. Information on center use and teacher growth over time can be collected by repeating and updating interviews.

5. Workshop evaluation

Initial reactions can be recorded on forms immediately at the end of each workshop. Periodic staff reviews of workshops can be linked to planning sessions. Ongoing workshops and courses can be evaluated halfway through the course, and the results can be applied to the structure and content of the second half.

6. External documentation

The external observer/documentor should become a participant in the life of the center in order to gain some insight into its workings. Nevertheless, an outsider can form only an impressionistic view at best. Center staff and users are the only ones who can provide a truly in-depth view of the center. Therefore, center staff should not rely heavily on external viewpoints. Staff people must first trust their own judgment and instincts, and then use the work of the documentor to raise questions about the center, but not to guide it. The documentor's relationship with the center must be that of a learner. There must be an ongoing dialogue between center staff and the documentor about the type of research questions which will result in learning and growth on all sides. In all cases, the focus of the research and its actual findings must serve the purposes of the users, staff and governance board. Remember that any documentation which reflects the life of a center in all its complexity takes a phenomenal amount of time.

Wishful thinking--future projects:

Evaluation of the effects of teachers' centers' work with children.

Interviews with teachers about actual changes they have effected in their classrooms.

Evaluation of classroom changes taking into account the institutional setting of the school and city.

Interviews with people who stop coming to a center, and why.

Documentation of follow-up work done by teachers in classrooms, and subsequent center programming growing out of that.

Looking at teachers' anxieties about their work, and the ways they affect interactions with co-workers, parents, children, and administrators.

The centers listed below mentioned their own evaluation methods:

Needs Assessment forms: Teacher Shelter (Oakland).

Attendance or registration data, including sign-in cards or sheets: Teacher Shelter; Workshop Center for Open Education (New York); Teacher Curriculum Work Center (Chicago); Philadelphia Teacher-Parent Center.

System for organizing multiple sign-up sheets: Teacher Center Inc. (New Haven).

Journals kept by participants: WCOE.

Journals kept by staff: TCWC.

Evaluation by local university: TCWC.

External documentation: WCOE; TCWC; Philadelphia Teacher-Parent Center.

Questionnaires to "repeaters": TALC; WCOE.

Face to face interviews with "repeaters": WCOE; CEC (Philadelphia).

Questionnaires re staff time: Philadelphia Teacher-Parent Center.

Evaluations of workshops: TALC; WCOE; New Haven; Philadelphia Traveling Teachers' Center.

A Coda: Mary Harahan of the National Institute of Education adds another perspective to the function of evaluation.

> We are planning a program of systematic inquiry into the concept of teachers' centers and their actual and potential role in the process of school improvement.
>
> At this stage in planning we feel it is important to encourage the following approaches to our research:
>
> (1) Internal documentation and/or evaluation of some aspect of an individual center's program. The purpose of such work would be to strengthen a particular Center by helping to clarify its own operation as well as to contribute to an empirical and analytical knowledge base that many could draw upon.
>
> (2) Cross-centers analysis: The purpose of such studies would be to examine particular themes (e.g. role of the advisor, parent involvement,

teacher collegiality, curriculum development etc.) across many different centers, and to illuminate and sharpen commonalities and differences.

(3) National surveys to collect baseline data: The purpose of such studies would be to draw a portrait of the world of centers: who comes; what participants are like; why they come; what they gain etc. (There are endless questions. We need to narrow them).

(4) Comparative studies of teachers' centers and traditional inservice strategies: The purpose is to clarify the alternative approach practiced by teachers' centers, and to see how they fit into a larger context of inservice needs. What are the policy implications of adopting a teachers' center approach rather than conventional inservice?

(5) Comparative studies of centers initiated by legislative action (such as the federal teacher center program) and "grassroots" centers initiated by interest and need.

Text compiled and edited by:
Gretchen Thomas and
Ruth Kreitzman

Designed by:
Ruth Kreitzman

Graphics by:
Chet Tanaka

Composed by:
Donn Karstens